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RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 6305
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 4310
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RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0977
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000131

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STATE FOR SA/INS; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IAEA](#) [CE](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: U/S BURNS DISCUSSES PEACE PROCESS, IRAN AND UN
REFORM WITH UNSYG ASPIRANT JAYANTHA DHANAPALA

Classified by: DCM JAMES F. ENTWISTLE. REASON: 1.4 (B,D).

11. (C) Summary. Jayantha Dhanapala told U/S Burns that the security situation in Sri Lanka "looks bad," but that President Rajapaksa remains patient and is committed to a non-military solution. He agreed with Burns that Iranian behavior in the IAEA is unacceptable but cautioned that Sri Lanka will have to see the resolution text at the early February meeting before deciding its vote (and would prefer consensus). Dhanapala and Burns found common ground on the UN reform process and Burns assured Dhanapala that the U.S. has made no decision on its position regarding the next UN Secretary General. End Summary

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12. (C) U/S Burns met with former Peace Secretariat chief and UNSYG aspirant Jayantha Dhanapala January 22 at the Ambassador's residence in Colombo. The Ambassador and DCM (notetaker) sat in.

War Imminent?

13. (C) Turning first to the tattered ceasefire in Sri Lanka, Burns asked Dhanapala what the U.S. could do to help. Dhanapala said the U.S. position of firmness as reflected in various statements and in the Ambassador's recent speech to the American Chamber of Commerce were very helpful to the government. The U.S. refusal to engage with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and its longstanding listing of the LTTE as a foreign terrorist organization also helped the government. Dhanapala said the GSL hoped that the U.S. and other nations would do more to investigate financial flows to the Tigers from their nations. Burns said the U.S. was taking a close look at the fundraising issue and that he would be commenting on it publicly while in Colombo.

14. (C) Asked how worried he was about a return to war, Dhanapala said "very, it looks bad." He opined that it is

hard to see the movement of LTTE supporters out of Jaffna along with "chatter" the GSL has picked up as anything other than war preparation. In his view, the LTTE wants to try to retake the Jaffna peninsula while perhaps also making a move on the harbor at Trincomalee. Dhanapala said he fully expects the LTTE to undertake attacks in Colombo, especially if the Solheim visit does not lead to some resolution on the venue for ceasefire talks. But, Dhanapala noted, President Rajapaksa remains patient and willing to talk, a position that is not easy to maintain with his southern political allies "now that bodybags are coming south again."

Losing Patience on Iran

15. (C) Burns asked for Dhanapala's perspective on the Iranian nuclear issue given Sri Lanka's presence on the IAEA Board of Governors. "Our patience is running out," Dhanapala replied. "The Iranians are not helping themselves." Sri Lanka fully supports the February 2 special session in Vienna but will want to see the text of the resolution before deciding whether to vote yes or to abstain ("obviously we hope consensus can be reached"). He noted many Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) members are now developing "serious reservations" about Iranian behavior on the nuclear issue. Burns briefed Dhanapala on the U.S. position and intentions, especially efforts to get P-5 unity. Dhanapala noted that the Iranian ambassador had recently met with President Rajapaksa but he did not yet have a readout on the meeting.

United Nations Reform/Dhanapala Candidacy for UNSYG

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16. (C) Burns briefed Dhanapala on U.S. efforts and views on UN reform, noting that the pace of reform is too slow. He also reviewed U.S. Congressional reservations about the UN. Dhanapala agreed on the need to accelerate the reform process as well as eliminate obsolete institutions like the trusteeship council. He agreed with Burns that the Peacebuilding Council (PBC) is a very useful idea ("we may need it here!"). Turning to the proposed Human Rights Council, Dhanapala told Burns that the U.S. decision not to insist on automatic P-5 membership was a "big concession" that would help move the process forward. He cautioned that the 2/3 requirement for Human Rights Council membership would not necessarily keep gross human rights violators off the council but agreed with Burns that it would certainly make it more difficult for them.

17. (C) Turning to Dhanapala's candidacy for UNSYG, Burns asked if he thought he could lead a reform-minded movement in the UN over the next few years. Dhanapala said he could, especially on economic and social issues. He noted, for example, that human rights issues had become too focused on politics in the sense that the emphasis was on votes rather than on broad-based UN-led efforts to improve human rights where they were deficient. "The commission process was Geneva-centric and didn't really improve human rights in the field." The United Nations, Dhanapala continued, needed to make a "much bigger impact on human rights." The commission has been discredited, he said, through practices like letting the most egregious cases be discussed in camera when "they needed to be discussed in the light of day."

18. (C) On UN management issues, Dhanapala said he had recently met with Under SYG for Management Burnham and had agreed with him that there is too much "dead wood" in the UN system. The promotion system is too rigid and is not based on an evaluation process. "The UN should be a meritocracy but it is not," Dhanapala concluded. Dhanapala agreed with Burns that peacekeeping operations (PKO) desperately need reform and that sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers in Africa had been a stain on the UN.

¶9. (C) Turning to a replacement for Kofi Annan, Burns told Dhanapala that the United States has made no commitments and has an "open mind." He noted that the Thai and South Korean candidates were campaigning hard. Dhanapala said he planned to be in Washington in April and would like to call on Burns then. Burns welcomed the idea and urged that Dhanapala also make calls on Capitol Hill, especially on Senator Norm Coleman and Congressman Henry Hyde.

¶10. (U) U/S Burns cleared this cable.
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